

ATTACHMENT 1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Announcement No: EPA-R9-AIR6-09-007

Indoor Environments: Reducing Public Exposure to Indoor Pollutants

NOTE: This FAQ does not address all components of the RFP.

SECTION (A) - Q & A regarding the grant process

Q. Who can I contact for additional information?

A. Mr. Shelly Rosenblum; email: Rosenblum.Shelly@epa.gov

Please note that in accordance with EPA's Competition Policy of January 11, 2005 (EPA Order 5700.5A1), EPA may respond to questions from individual applicants regarding threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement. EPA cannot discuss draft proposals, provide informal comments on draft proposals, or provide advice to applicants on how to respond to ranking criteria.

Q. Our organization has a Region 9 Indoor Air grant or cooperative agreement which will not end until November, 2010. Can we apply for funding in a different priority area?

A. Yes

Q. Is an organization allowed to submit more than one proposal, if they are for different projects?

A. Yes, an organization is allowed to submit more than one proposal as long as the additional proposal is for a different project.

Q. Can we include more than one priority area in our project?

A. Yes. This could be an innovative approach. The concept proposal should show how the different priority areas are linked in the project.

Q. Can we apply for one year funding?

A. No. These awards are for two-year projects.

Q. Why are the pages documenting "Past Performance" and "Programmatic Capability" not counted toward the concept proposal page limit?

A. This requirement could differentially affect applicants. If your response to this requirement would put you over the page limit, you should respond in a clearly identified attachment, and indicate in your narrative that this is where you have placed your response. .

Q. Is there a cost sharing or match requirement?

A. There is no cost sharing requirement, and no points will be given for this, but leveraging of EPA funds can affect point score in the evaluation criteria. (See in Section V.A., Budget.)

Q. What is "leveraging?"

A. See RFP Section III.B.

Q. Is it helpful and useful to EPA for us to clearly show that our project is scalable if I apply for the maximum funding?

A. Yes.

Q. How do I clearly show scalability?

A. If an alternate project scope is provided, applicants may provide one additional page to describe changes to work plan, including expected outputs and outcomes. This extra page will not count towards the page limit. If needed, you may provide a separate budget page for this alternate iteration.

Q. Please define sustainability. Is there a time period for how long we should be able to sustain a project?

A. The answer to the question is that there is no specific time period for how long the project should continue after the grant has ended. This links to the following: Under Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria (Project Sustainability and Replication), “when EPA funding concludes, what is the likelihood that project can continue?”

Q. Is it required to use the Outputs/Outcomes Tables in our proposal?

A. While the table format is not mandatory, you may find that it is the easiest way to fulfill the requirement that you have described the activities, outputs and environmental outcomes aimed at achieving environmental results.

Q. Would a project utilizing EPA’s *Healthy Schools Environmental Assessment Tool (Healthy SEAT)* accomplish EPA’s goal of “all schools using IAQ Tools for Schools, or comparable IAQ practices, to ensure a strong IAQ management plan and subsequent improved IAQ in schools?”

A. EPA’s “**Healthy SEAT**” is **not** a substitute for the day-to-day vigilance and good practice that is necessary at every school to manage effectively environmental, health and safety issues in a manner that protects children, staff and the environment at all times. “Healthy SEAT” is software tool to help school districts establish and manage comprehensive school facility self-assessment programs. Among its options is an indoor air assessment checklist, which recommends that the district assessor make sure that each school has an IAQ coordinator, an IAQ profile and management plan, and records of ventilation system inspections. However, ensuring that IAQ is protected requires that school staff implement an IAQ management plan on an on-going basis, and that attention is paid on a daily basis to all activities in the school that may impact indoor air quality. This daily school-level vigilance is also essential to protect students and staff from many other potential problems, including chemical hazards, pest infestations, and water problems that may cause mold, to name only a few. (See: <http://www.epa.gov/schools/healthyseat/frequentquestions.htm>)

Q. What supplies are allowable or not allowable under this program?

A. EPA funds can only be used for environmental (not medical) purposes. This prohibition includes asthma supplies such as spacers, peak flow meters, nebulizers, etc., but *not* appropriate environmental mitigation supplies. Additionally, EPA funds may not be used for “incentives,” such as t-shirts, pencils, etc. See Section IV. Elements of the Concept Proposal G: Budget/Supplies

Q. When will the project period begin under these awards?

A. Our goal is to begin the project approximately in January, 2010.

Q. What will happen after my proposal is selected?

A. If you are selected, you will be receiving a grant guidance letter instructing you on how to prepare the final application. There may need to be negotiations about your final work plan, budget, and deliverables.

Q. Can funding be used to acquire services?

A. Funding may be used to acquire services, provided the recipient follows procurement and sub-award or sub-grant procedures contained in 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31, as applicable.

Q. Will EPA consider partial funding for projects?

A. Yes. EPA reserves the right to partially-fund proposals by funding discrete activities, projects, or phases of proposed proposals. If EPA decides to partially fund proposals, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal, or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award, and that maintains the integrity of the competition and the evaluation/selection process.

Q. What is an example of “scalability”?

A. A proposal might request \$60,000 over two years, and plan to achieve a total of 60 schools adopting practices comparable to “IAQ Tools for Schools” during this period. A “scalability option” attachment might indicate that if the actual award were \$40,000 instead of the \$60,000 requested, the decrease in “deliverables” would be proportional to the size of the award (i.e. 40 schools). Alternatively, the scalability attachment might indicate that at an award of \$40,000, the deliverables would drop to 30 instead of 40, due to the way that the leveraged budget is allocated.

Q. In the Evaluation Criteria, it says “applicants with no relevant or available past performance or reporting history will receive a ‘neutral score’ for this factor.” What is meant by a “neutral score”?

A. A “neutral score” is considered to 50% of the available points for the factor.

Q. In “threshold eligibility criteria” #11, it states: “Proposals for Managing Indoor Air Quality in Schools must include a written letter of commitment from an upper level school district official who has the authority to assure that the project will move forward. This will generally be a Superintendent, or Associate, Assistant, or Deputy Superintendent. This letter is required from each district where the project will take place. In the case of independent, private or parochial schools, the letter of commitment should come from comparable upper school administration.” Does this mean that we need to get a letter from the Principal of each school where the project will be conducted?

A. It is not necessary to provide a letter of commitment from each Principal in a school district where an upper district official has authorized your project. This criterion recognizes that these projects may take place at private schools or other K-12 schools independent of the authority of central administration at a school district. In such cases, the highest level of administration with the authority to assure that the project will go forward may have a title other than Superintendent, Associate, Assistant or Deputy Superintendent.

SECTION (B) Program-specific questions:

Q. If we have an existing project that we want to expand to a new target group is this eligible?

A. Yes.

Q. Can projects include research?

A. If the applicant needs to gather information or generate data to support or inform outreach, conducting it may be eligible. Generation of data or other research isolated from outreach program activities would not be eligible.

Q. Will EPA fund proposals to correct IAQ problems in schools? Does EPA seek proposals that demonstrate that repairs in schools and the use of good IAQ management plans lead to better IAQ?

A. EPA is not authorized to repair buildings - this is considered implementation. For example, EPA can demonstrate that IAQ management plans in schools are effective, but cannot go into a broad number of schools and pay for mitigation. Applicant should outline the methodology they will use in addressing IAQ in schools. EPA cautions about proposing programs or program implementation projects. EPA's authority extends to outreach, education, and demonstration projects only.

Q. Can grant funds be used to mitigate homes?

A. Mitigation is acceptable under the authority for this grant to the extent that it is done as a way to teach occupants how to clean-up and/or prevent indoor environmental triggers of asthma in their home.

Q. What exactly do you mean by "health professionals trained" as an output for indoor environmental triggers for asthma?

A. The term "health professional" indicates someone who has received a health care degree, license, certification or credential, but can also include students in the health professions, such as respiratory therapy, nursing and medical students. Asthma "training" should include a meaningful component on asthma triggers, involve a formal or informal presentation (not just distributing educational materials at an event), and should be at least the length of a 45-50 minute conference session. Outputs not meeting these criteria should be reported using other descriptors.

Q. We will be providing training on indoor environmental asthma triggers to "promotoras." How should we categorize these?

A. Outputs related to community health workers such as promotoras, or "peers," can be described as such, apart from "health professionals trained."